

## ***FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** February 14, 2013

**Agenda Item:** Montana CWD Management Plan

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Proposed Rule

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 15 minutes

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### **Background**

The decision notice and environmental assessment for FWP's "Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan for Free Ranging Wildlife in Montana" were completed in 2005. The plan sought to outline FWP responses to CWD detection in free-ranging wildlife, particularly deer and elk, by depopulating the local herd when various techniques showed that at least 5 percent of a herd contracted the disease. CWD, then, would be eradicated by removing the host species, typically deer, within some area containing infected individuals.

Similar actions were largely identified in other state wildlife agency plans that also tried to address the issue of CWD in deer. The typical prescription included eradication in specific areas. Subsequent results, however, especially in Wisconsin, showed that eradication efforts failed. Eradication efforts didn't result in a decline in: (1) disease prevalence or (2) the abundance of animals in the infected herd. In addition, those efforts were typically unpopular with the public.

Today, there isn't a clear prescription for managing CWD. Current state plans lean heavily on an "adaptive management approach," which depends on research to guide future decisions. Specific prescriptions to depopulate infected herds have largely been abandoned.

This proposal is to temporarily suspend some management and surveillance portions of Montana's approved CWD plan until a new plan is approved. In light of new information and research, FWP's wildlife health staff is currently developing new alternatives for the management portion of the plan. In addition, FWP is developing plans for reduced surveillance efforts commensurate with current funding levels. These efforts will lead to development of new alternatives that will ultimately be submitted to the FWP Commission for approval.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

The public comment period on this proposal will extend through 5 p.m., Monday, March 25.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

The commission could adopt the proposal as proposed or with adjustments.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends that the commission adopt the proposal to suspend portions of the CWD management plan. Those portions are out-of-date given the lessons learned from other states. FWP is already working to identify and define new alternatives.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move the FWP Commission adopt the proposed suspension of portions of the Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan for Free Ranging Wildlife in Montana as presented by FWP.